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Via Internet Transmittal

Re: Raised Bill No. 6187, LCO No. 2473 – An Act Mandating Employers Provide Paid Sick Leave to Employees

New Castle Hotels & Resorts is an employer with four locations in Connecticut – we have hotels in Stamford, Norwalk and Shelton and our corporate headquarters in Shelton.

In Stamford we have traditional benefits and full-time employees earn 5 sick days a year for personal illness, to a maximum accumulation of 15 days at which time we pay 50% of whatever goes over the accrual. They also receive vacation, holiday, bereavement and jury duty pay. We are a small operation in Stamford – maybe 20 employees – but we do the right thing by our full-time staff.

At the other locations in Connecticut we offer paid time off, which is envisioned to cover sick, personal, vacation time, etc.(not holidays, bereavement or jury duty.) In the Norwalk and Shelton hotels, in a first year of employment, a full-time employee will accumulate 5 days starting at day 90 and then 10 days after 1 year, 15 after 5 and 20 after 7. At our corporate headquarters a slightly higher benefit is given.

We are a very generous and competitive employer but that means that between wages, benefits and healthcare, we are struggling to keep our businesses viable. We certainly believe that those employees who work on a full-time basis need to have days they can use to take care of themselves, their families, etc. That is why the Paid Time Off program is great as it is very flexible vs. traditional sick time which is really meant to deal with an employee's personal health. If an employee needs to take additional time off for family members, their vacation benefit would need to come into play, but again – that is what the time is there for.

However, I deeply disagree when the State government starts dictating benefits vs. market conditions. For instance, in the above proposal, it is suggested that these benefits start accruing day 1 vs. our program that starts day 90. We used to have our program start day 1 but found that since we are a generous employer and pay employees 50% of unused paid time off, we were paying money to new hires who had cost us money to recruit and train but who had not contributed to the business before they left – a waste of money we could not afford.

We also find that our part-time staff – who we really depend on in order to give our full-time team members much needed time off and to not incur overtime – have other jobs already paying them sick time. Also, we need these part timers to come to work when scheduled, as I state above, to ensure that the full-time staff get a break from work and so that overtime is not an issue/cost to the business. Mandating that part-time staff earn sick benefits would have a huge negative impact on a business like mine which is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and really depends on a dependable cadre of part-timers to keep the business going. When they call off sick who is to do that work and if it is the full-timer, which is costing me extra money, why should I have to pay a part-timer for staying home and adding to my financial burden? When we as a business do not offer benefits, it is often because we cannot afford to give them and in this case that decision is one reached based by both economic and practical reasons. For the State to determine we must give part timers benefits – regardless of the cost and toll it will take on our business – is not fair and not in the ultimate best interest of the economy of Connecticut, which is already unhealthy.

Please do not support this proposal. It is just plain bad for business, especially now in this economy. I would not like to see the State require a sick benefit at all as I don't think the state government should dictate benefits, but I could live with one for full-time employees – i.e. 32+ hours a week which is a pretty standard full-time definition. But giving this benefit to part-time employees is just a non-starter and really needs to be taken from the table as being extremely costly. PLEASE!!!

Thank you for considering my opinion.

Marian R. Barbieri
Vice President of Human Resources